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KHPA Responds to Senate Committee Action

(TOPEKA) – Kansas Health Policy Authority Executive Director Marcia Nielsen issued the following statement today in response to action last (Thursday) night by the Senate Ways and Means Committee:

“Although we at KHPA understand the serious fiscal concerns that legislators are forced to deal with this year, we are disappointed in the committee’s decision to delete \$1.2 million to expand the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to cover children in families up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level. We remain hopeful that the money can be restored before the legislature adjourns this session.

“Kansas lawmakers face a tremendous challenge in balancing the state budget in the face of declining revenues. Unfortunately, many Kansas families face an equally daunting task as they struggle through this economic downturn. More than 20,000 Kansas workers lost their jobs in the last half of 2008. Many of them are applying for public benefits for the first time in their lives. We have seen the number of new applications grow in recent months. We have also seen the state’s uninsured rate grow as employers, struggling with the recession and the rising cost of health care, find they can no longer afford to provide health benefits to their workers

“In February, the KHPA Board asked to add funding for the state’s share of the expansion to the FY 2010 budget. The Governor also included it in her revised budget proposal, using new federal stimulus dollars to pay the state’s share of the cost. KHPA estimates it eventually would extend coverage to an additional 8,000 uninsured Kansas children from low- and moderate-income families.”

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